

Ornithological Literature

Edited by William E. Davis, Jr.

A BIRDER'S GUIDE TO VIRGINIA. Compiled by David W. Johnston. American Birding Association, Inc., Colorado Springs, Colorado. 1997: 280 pp., 46 maps, 10 black-and-white photographs, 13 line drawings. \$18.95 (soft wrap-around cover, wire-O binding).—Another in the burgeoning series of American Birding Association bird finding guides, this book generally follows the format of previous volumes except that the bar-graphs of most books are replaced by an annotated list of 425 species (390 of which occur regularly in the state). The introductory materials include a brief review of the geology and physiography of the state; a section on ornithological history; weather and seasonal variations; tick, chigger, and other pest warnings; where to stay; who to write to for maps and other information; and some birding opportunities of special interest such as the annual Eastern Shore Birding Festival. The site guide section divides the state into six regions, Eastern Shore, Coastal Plain, Northern, Central, and Southern Piedmont, and Southern Mountains and Valleys. Each section begins with a brief description of the region and a regional map, followed by site guides (some are divided into subsections) each of which has a map and text. The text is divided into sections on background, essentials, habitats, birds (season by season), rare or unusual birds, and special comments. The special comments sections are particularly useful, often describing non-birds of interest such as wildflowers, mammals, or reptiles, and areas where tape recorders should not be used. A chapter on hawk-watching (including a bar graph and site map), and a chapter on pelagic birding will be of special interest to many. In the annotated checklist asterisks denote Virginia specialty birds, which are treated in a separate chapter. The chapter on other animals of Virginia lists butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals together with brief comments on status and distribution, and should be of interest to those with natural history in-

terests that go beyond birds. The book is, as is usual for this series, well designed, well edited, and user friendly. I found the site descriptions excellent for the areas of the state I know best, and assume the rest are equally good. I highly recommend this book to anyone planning to visit Virginia.—WILLIAM E. DAVIS, JR.

THE FOOD WEB OF A TROPICAL RAIN FOREST. Edited by Douglas P. Reagan and Robert B. Waide. Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois. 1996: 616 pp., black-and-white photographs with caption figs., numerous tables. \$39.95 (paper); \$110.00 (cloth).—This multi-authored volume represents an ambitious and successful attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of the trophic dynamics of a single tropical rain forest. However, the rain forest chosen is El Verde, at an elevation between 300 and 500 meters on the northwest slope of the Luquillo Mountains on the island of Puerto Rico. Situated as it is, on an island, this forest is dramatically different in species richness and thus in trophic complexity from any mainland rain forest in Central or South America. Thus it becomes difficult to draw any generalizations from this otherwise model study. The book is divided into 14 chapters, of which one, authored by Robert B. Waide, is on birds. Birds therefore occupy about 7% of the total pages in the book, although birds are occasionally mentioned in other chapters.

Though birds exert significant influences at many points on the food web of El Verde, they are most influential as predators, particularly on lizards and frogs. Other trophic influences, such as nectarivory and frugivory are also important avian contributions to the overall trophic dynamics, especially with regard to dispersal of plants. The overall ecological importance of birds in part is due to the absence of many kinds of mammals that are important seed dispersers in mainland forests. Avian